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FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE
AMERICAN EMBASSY
LONDON, W. 1.
5 Grosvenor Square

28 August 1956

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Foreign Broadcast Information Service
2430 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C.

Subject: Principles of Monitoring

Dear Roger:

As you know, the question of principles of monitoring proposed by FBIS has been discussed at various times over the past two years with BBC personnel both at formal meetings and on odd occasions whey they presented themselves.

Although no formal meetings have been held recently to discuss principles of monitoring, meetings have been held with the BBC in which FBIS requirements have been presented and to a great extent accepted. In effect this acceptance on the part of the BBC has meant an agreement to fulfill the requirements contained in the principles of monitoring but without the acceptance necessarily of the principles themselves.

At the meeting held 1 March 1955 at Caversham, FBIS said that written topical indicators of the contents of each monitored broadcast should be prepared and that these lists of indicators should serve as a basis for selection of material for processing. In reply the BBC representative at the meeting said that except for Moscow broadcasts, topical indicators were not normally prepared for each item on broadcasts and that such indicators could not serve as a basis for selection of material for processing, since this function is performed by the monitor listening to the program.

In contrast to this statement of 1 March 1955, the BBC agreed at a recent meeting with the FBIS representatives to give topical indicators for every item, news or commentary, on 60 separate programs in addition to the Moscow material. A list of these programs is attached.

At the same time, although in theory the monitor is still making the selection from these programs for processing, instructions to the monitor reflect most carefully the processing requirements for both FBIS and BBC. The result is that the monitor, instead of having a free hand in making a selection of material for processing, is free to follow the instructions given him. These instructions actually allow him little freedom at all, at least hardly more than that allowed FBIS monitors who use their intimate

knowledge of a country in recommending certain items for processing.

In addition to these changes in the production of monitors' summaries, the BBC is producing as a matter of course and largely without requests from FBIS all textual material required by FBIS. Previously, at the meeting of 1 March 1955, the BBC had said some of the requirements for various texts of Soviet material "must remain in abeyance." Also, although not included in the principles of monitoring, an important agreement was reached in December 1955 on the definitions of processing designators in which the BBC finally adopted the FBIS definitions of summary and abandoned their "third personal reportage" which had made editorial processing so difficult both here and in Washington.

Although there has been this BBC desire to do the maximum in giving FBIS nearly all the material required in any application of the principles of monitoring, there has been a reluctance to accept formally these principles, if not actually a passive resistance to them. Part of the reason for this, expressed unofficially, is that the BBC feels uncomfortable in tying itself down to a set of principles which may in the future take on new implications not envisaged at this time. Therefore, regardless of written agreements on principles, it would seem at this point the main goal for FBIS is to get from the BBC all material which the principles would require in application.

I trust that this review and the attached list of programs will bring you up to date on the status of our work—which I hope you consider a step forward—in promoting the adoption of a set of principles of monitoring.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]
Chief, London Bureau

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Attachment

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The British Broadcasting Corporation

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Chief FBIS,

"2430 E Street, N.W.,

Washington 25, D.C.

U.S.A.